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COUNTRY SIDE: NEGOTIATIONS IN THE BERLIN CRISIS

4/10/62

March 27 - April 5

1/2/62

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

Negotiations. While Moscow continues to maintain virtual silence on the subject of negotiations over Berlin and Germany (and has not even commented on Ulbricht's access arbitration board proposal other than to report his speech factually), foreign journalists report a certain "optimism" emanating from official Soviet circles on the outcome of the Rusk-Gromyko exchanges in Geneva. A Yugoslav correspondent also cited official sources as hinting that de facto recognition of GDR sovereignty could be achieved by Western consent to a separate GDR-Soviet peace treaty and to a GDR role in regulating "free access to West Berlin as a free city under international supervision." According to these sources the nature of the "supervision was still to be thrashed out."

GDR Deputy Foreign Minister Sepp Schwab, in an interview with the Times of India April 4, is reported to have stated the Soviet proposal for an international control authority on Berlin access was only a first step and that further measures to meet Western objectives are "not excluded." He stated that not only was Pankow willing to accept such curtailment of its sovereignty but that it was also immaterial to the GDR who created the authority, how it was composed, or whether the GDR were included in the negotiations on access. His only condition was that "no espionage be carried on from West Berlin."

The same day the Schwab interview was published, Pravda printed a commentary on the West Berlin radio station RIAS, charging inter alia it was an American-operated organ for intelligence and subversion.

Military Preparations and Demonstrations. The USSR abruptly ceased filing flight plans for Soviet military flights in the Berlin air corridors on March 30. The eight flights already scheduled for that day were cancelled without explanation (four had taken place the previous day), and no subsequent plans had been filed by April 5. Soviet flight activity was noted across and in the corridor area, but no flights along the length of the corridors were reported.

The East Germans announced April 3 the conclusion of GDR ground maneuvers, noting that Soviet, Polish, and Czech officers had been in attendance.

Following Soviet rejection of the US protest concerning VOPC harassment of a US Potsdam Military Mission tour, US military authorities issued instructions that the Soviet Mission in Frankfurt could travel in the American zone only with an American escort. Marshal Konev retaliated by ordering the US mission confined to quarters in Potsdam and by forbidding the members to travel without specific permission of the Soviet authorities. On April 5, however, the US commander in Germany met Konev in Potsdam and the two agreed to permit both missions to resume normal operations the next day.

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Berlin and Germany. Reports indicate the GDR customs law, enacted March 28, is now expected to be implemented April 19. No text is yet available. Possibly in anticipation of implementation, East Berlin authorities revoked all entry permits for East Berlin held by West German truck drivers and by West Berliners working in East Berlin. New permits of limited validity were being granted to most of the individuals affected after a check of their bona fides. The entry permits of some West Berlin business representatives of West German firms have been permanently revoked, however, and the FRG firms advised to employ West German representatives for contacts with GDR trading organs. West German tourist buses were not permitted to enter East Berlin April 1 because "new entry forms" were allegedly not yet available for such tourist traffic.

A report that West German trucks would shortly be barred from the Berlin-Helmstedt autobahn on Saturdays and Sundays was denied by East German IZT officials.

There have been recent indications the West German communist party (KPD) is preparing to alter its administrative ties with the East German SED to permit more independent operations. A similar move on the part of the West Berlin SED, severing its ties with the East Berlin SED, has also been rumored. The motivation for the change is said to be the expectation that communications between the east and west groups will become progressively more difficult and dangerous.

GDR authorities announced that between January 1 and March 18, Scandinavian Airlines had been granted 52 permits to overfly or land in the GDR, KLM had had 13 flights to GDR destinations, and Sabena 12. On April 2, Soviet Aeroflot inaugurated thrice weekly jet (TU-104) flights between Moscow and Berlin-Schonefeld.

Meat rations cards have reportedly been printed in East Germany, and rationing is expected to be introduced in late summer this year.

Stories emanating from Belgrade indicate the Yugoslav Government may be interested in re-establishing diplomatic contacts with the FRG and to that end might be willing to permit its relations with the GDR to deteriorate somewhat temporarily.

ASSESSMENT OF SOVIET INTENTIONS

The Moscow leaks through journalist circles, the Sepp Schwab interview, and Pravda's charges against RIAS suggest the USSR might intend to modify certain aspects of its position on Berlin and Germany in the next round of talks. In particular, it might seek to trade concessions on access and West Berlin status for American abandonment of RIAS. Moscow's public reticence on the entire German problem, which now dates back to the Ulbricht-Khrushchev talks at the end of February, and the marked change in the East German tenor on an access authority (it was still being flatly rejected as late as February) hints that some flexibility in the Soviet position might soon be revealed. The sudden cessation of Soviet air carrier harassment and the current lack of interference with autobahn traffic could be part of an attempt to set the stage for an improvement in atmosphere.

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Meanwhile, the GDR appears to be proceeding with its consolidation of an international frontier through Berlin. Recognition of current entry permits was activated in part by seductive calculations (to limit use of such permits for smuggling out refugees), but the action also provided the regime with better oversight and control of daily border traffic which will be a major problem should formal customs and frontier controls be introduced at the sector crossings. The recent reticence of the regime on the entire subject of the customs law may reflect concern as to the consequences of its implementation -- whether the FRG will in fact retaliate with IZT restrictions as has been hinted.

Plans to separate the KPD and SED organizations and the West Berlin SED from the East Berlin party may stem from concern for communications. However, separation of the party structures is likely also to reflect long-range communist plans for three independent parties in line with Soviet acceptance of an indefinite division of Germany into three parts, the FRG, GDR, and West Berlin.

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